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C O N F I D E N T I A L CONAKRY 000400

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2019
TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL ASEC GV
SUBJECT: REPORTED INCREASE IN MILITARY TENSION NOT VISIBLE
ON THE STREETS OF CONAKRY

Classified By: POLOFF JULIA TULLY FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. According to information obtained by Embassy's DAO, some elements of the military appear to be solidifying alliances with either Captain Jean Claude Pivi or the Minister of Defense Sekouba Konate. Military sources agree that tensions within the army are very high, though there is little evidence of this in the street and few Guineans outside military and government circles appear to be aware of it. An Embassy EAC meeting on July 7 and a follow-up meeting on July 10 reviewed preparedness and safety guidelines, as well as indicators for potential military violence. Conakry, however, remains peaceful. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Increased reports of divisions within the Guinean military have surfaced more forcefully this week although little evidence of this conflict is visible on Conakry's streets. According to Embassy DAO, factions of the Guinean Armed Forces appear to be aligning themselves with either the Minister of Presidential Security, Captain Jean Claude Pivi, or the Minister of Defense, Sekouba Konate. Sousou officers are reported to be supporting Pivi in an alliance with military from the Forest Region, while Malinke officers are said to have gone over to Konate. During the early hours of July 6 and 7 patrols from both factions conducted reconnaissances on each other's positions, further heightening speculation of a possible rift within the military.

¶3. (C) The information DAO obtained is based on close military contacts and other sources, but has not been convincingly corroborated by non-military, non-GOG contacts of the Embassy. Military sources emphasize, however, that the situation in the armed forces appears tense, leading most to believe a combustible mix is either gathering or is already present. What might spark a military clash and whether or not it could lead to broader civilian unrest is unknown at this point. The timing is also an open question, with some sources claiming an imminent conflict, while others see an event in the more distant future.

Ethnic Military Divisions Will Lead to Strife

¶4. (C) On July 7, an Embassy contact who is also a CNDD sympathizer and government official, said he sees the military becoming more and more divided along ethnic lines. He described military forces as bored, underpaid, and over-armed. This combination, the contact believes, could quickly deteriorate and fracture along ethnic lines if it is not resolved. He urged the U.S. to focus on restructuring the Guinean military rather than pushing for elections. If the army is not restructured, he added with a sense of urgency, "we are sitting on a bomb - we are no different than Sierra

Leone or Liberia." He concluded by minimizing Dadis's presidency, waving his hand dismissively, "Forget about Dadis -- that's not the main concern."

¶5. (C) That warnings of an impending clash are intentionally being passed to us in order to influence U.S. policy vis a vis the CNDD cannot be discounted.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) Divisions within the military have been observed even before the junta took power but were primarily between generations. Since the coup, however, loyalties to Dadis, Pivi, Konate and Tiegboro have fueled a lack of military discipline and a culture of impunity that now permeates the GAF. Recent shifts in military alliances are, therefore, not surprising, but the emphasis on ethnic divisions is more troubling. Conakry appears calm and most Guineans seem unaware of the military maneuverings. Nevertheless, at an EAC meeting on July 7, Embassy preparedness and safety guidelines were reviewed and a warden message was issued. During a follow-up EAC meeting on July 10, the situation was again reviewed and no new information was presented. While there is reason for concern, daily life in Conakry remains for the present unaffected. END COMMENT.

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